

Mr. Covey



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

8/18

Attached is a statement from the Constitutional Conference in Windhoek (Namibia) which spells out the Conference's commitment to an early date for independence.

The most important portion is marked in red.

PRESS STATEMENT

CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE OF SOUTH WEST AFRICA

The Constitutional Committee appointed by the South West African Constitutional Conference expects the territory to become independent on December 31, 1978.

In a statement issued in Windhoek, South West Africa, today, the Committee stated that December 31, 1978 can, with reasonable certainty, be fixed as the date for the independence of the territory.

Mr Roelof F. Botha, South African Ambassador to the United Nations, transmitted the text of the statement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations today.

The Committee announced that agreement in principle had already been reached in respect of the most important points to ensure a real and permanent solution to the territory's problems.

The Committee foresees the creation of an interim government for South West Africa as soon as agreement has been reached on a constitutional foundation.

It also re-affirmed the interdependence of South West Africa's various population groups and its firm desire to maintain South West Africa as a unity.

The Committee envisages a form of government which, particularly in the central body, would provide adequate protection of minority groups. The Committee also rejected attempts to solve South West Africa's problems by violent means.

The South West African Constitutional Conference was first convened on September 1, 1975. It has since then made considerable progress. White, black and colored leaders in South West Africa are participating in the conference.

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Here is the full text of the statement by the Committee:

During the first meeting of the Constitutional Conference in September 1975 a Declaration of Intent was issued in which certain principles were laid down and certain aims were established.

We hereby re-affirm this Declaration of Intent and reiterate our conviction that a real and permanent solution for our country's problems can be found on this course. During the recent past a detailed study has been made of different aspects of the overall situation. We are happy to be able to announce that agreement in principle has already been reached in respect of the most important points. In particular we wish to refer to the following:-

1. SELF-DETERMINATION AND INDEPENDENCE

The Committee is in agreement that 31 December 1978 can, with reasonable certainty, be fixed as the date for the independence for South West Africa. In the meantime many matters will obviously have to be negotiated with South Africa: as for example Walvis Bay⁺, South African Railways⁺, water and electricity supply, monetary and financial matters, security, etcetera.

As soon as agreement has been reached on a constitutional foundation and the above negotiations completed, we envisage, in terms of such constitutional foundation, the creation of an inⁿNo Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/05/02 : LOC-HAK-91-4-11-4 functions and to establish a permanent government on the basis of a Constitution which will be finalized during the interim period.

+ The port and settlement of Walvis Bay on the west coast of the territory, which is 434 sq. miles in extent, is part of the Republic of South Africa.

+² The territory is served by South African Railways.

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2. TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

The Committee re-affirms the interdependence of its various population groups and its firm desire to maintain South West Africa as a unity.

3. FORM OF GOVERNMENT

As we do not wish to anticipate a final arrangement at this stage, it would be premature to furnish details concerning a form of government, but the Committee can already announce that it envisages a system of government in which, particularly in the central body, provision will be made for the adequate protection of minority groups.

4. PEACEFUL SOLUTION

We reject once again any attempts to solve our country's problems by violence and urgently appeal to all civilized nations to oppose with all the strength at their disposal any attempt to solve our problems by force.

5. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MATTERS

We wish again to appeal to the South African Government and all other private or public bodies to execute the Council's decisions on these matters with all speed⁺.

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⁺Includes matters related to aspects of discrimination, economic upliftment, social upliftment and education.

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